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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001325

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ: TURKISH GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT AWAIT NSC  
MEETING BEFORE DECISION ON U.S. DEPLOYMENT

REF: A. ANKARA 1207

[1](#)B. ANKARA 1153

(U) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch. Reasons: 1.5(b)(d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Turkish Parliament has rescheduled for March 1 -- one day after the powerful National Security Council (NSC) meets -- its debate and possible vote on AK Party Government's draft decision to permit U.S. troop deployment through Turkey and deployment of Turkish troops in N. Iraq. A decisive NSC recommendation could change the dynamics of the deployment decision, but the NSC last month left formal responsibility in the Government's hands. End summary.

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"International Legitimacy": Who Decides?  
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[1](#)2. (C) As the NSC meets and Parliament prepares to debate Iraq policy on March 1, the Government is now facing an open challenge by President Sezer and Parliament Speaker Arinc, who are cooperating on the issue of the constitution's art. 92 international legitimacy clause. The odd-fellows alliance between the Kemalist Sezer and the Islam-oriented Arinc is fueling the already pronounced 11th-hour uncertainty and promoting further delay in the run-up to the floor debate.

-- Sezer has repeatedly asserted that a second UNSC resolution authorizing force against Saddam is necessary to achieve the "international legitimacy" necessary for Parliament to act. Arinc declared Feb. 24 that he opposes acting on a proposal absent the requisite "international legitimacy" as required by art. 92. Arinc's stance resonates with the great majority of the AK parliamentary group.

-- According to Advanced Strategy Center executive director and close observer of State affairs Faruk Demir, Sezer is trying to leave the strong impression in the public's mind that AK Party, both as the government and parliamentary majority, bears full responsibility for any consequences of an affirmative vote absent a new UNSC enforcement resolution. Demir predicted that, if Sezer and the General Staff representatives on the NSC try to put additional pressure on the government to increase AK's internal splits and uncertainty, the vote might be delayed beyond March 1. -- Murat Yetkin, the influential and well-connected columnist for the daily Radikal wrote Feb. 28 that the military has reversed course and now signaling its unease about the "haste" with which the AK Government brought its petition to Parliament. According to Yetkin, Sezer is trying to "create the impression that AK wants to pull the country into war over the objections of the military and the President."

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What Next?  
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[1](#)3. (C) The political ground continues to shift as the various players maneuver for tactical advantage:

-- Akif Beki, a senior correspondent at Islam-oriented Kanal-7 news, asserted to us Feb. 28 as Faruk Demir did that Sezer's comments yesterday amounted to a step back, leaving the formal decision completely in Parliament's hands. He predicted that the NSC is likely to strengthen GOT's hands somewhat by underscoring the need to protect Turkey's national interests -- and that Parliament will pass the petition.

-- Former ambassador to Washington Nuzhet Kandemir, now a senior figure in right-of-center DYP, opined to us Feb. 28 that the NSC will not go beyond its January decision and will avoid pushing the GOT or Parliament in a specific direction, thus leaving all the public responsibility for the decision

in the GOT's and Parliament's (i.e., AK Party's) hands. He predicted that Parliament will approve the resolution.

-- Hasan Cemal Guzel, a close advisor to the late P.M. and President Turgut Ozal and now a leading columnist for daily "Tercuman", and Sevkett Bulent Yahnici, a leading figure in nationalist MHP and a State Minister in the 1999-2002 Ecevit government, rejected Sezer's approach on international legitimacy in separate discussions with us Feb. 26-27 and predicted that the resolution will pass.

-- Sami Selcuk, recently retired as the Chief Justice of the High Court of Appeals, offered to us Feb. 27 that Sezer is powerless to formally challenge a parliamentary "decision" -- as in this case on Iraq -- before the Constitutional Court. Nevertheless, a current senior Supreme Court Justice cautioned us Feb. 24 that, if the Parliament violates its by-laws or incorrectly applies them "in any way", then Sezer will have grounds to take the decision to the Constitutional Court.

-- Opposition CHP shares Sezer's Kemalist outlook and is committed to voting en bloc against the Government's draft resolution. Offering a representative view, Sukru Elekdag, a retired senior diplomat and now a CHP M.P., declared publicly that he and his colleagues would not support "America's dirty war" against Iraq. He also expressed sympathy and support for the Arinc-led anti-war faction in AK. His public comments are more pointed than but not different from those he and other senior CHPers, such as former ambassadors Onur Oymen and Inal Batu, have made privately to us steadily over the past month.

-- M.P.s in both AK and CHP do not appear to be motivated by any concern over a possible financial collapse in the event of a no vote. As reported ref B, Central Bank Governor Serdengeçti intimated to us that AK in particular does not appreciate how serious the situation is, and seems to think it can manage its way through without either the U.S. assistance or the IMF program. "Their lack of awareness makes me very scared," he said.

-- On the other hand, Mustafa Gunay, General Secretary of the Fethullah Gulen-connected (Islamist) ISHAD businessmen's association and well connected with Gul, said that the Turkish State and Government is fully aware of the economic considerations at stake, but the GOT is concerned above all by what it perceives as weak USG assurances that an independent Kurdish state will not emerge in a post-Saddam Iraq. According to Gunay, Gul and TGS Ozkok share a more conciliatory (pro-US) view, but are being stymied by: 1) hardliners in the military leadership, including TGS Deputy Chief Buyukanit; and 2) FM Yasar Yakis, who shares traditionalist Turkish State suspicions of the U.S.

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Comment  
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14. (C) We will have to await the NSC decision, due the evening of Feb. 28, before being able to assess with more precision whether the March 1 debate will lead to a vote or a further postponement. As our contacts suggest, what is driving the delay is, ultimately: 1) fear on the part of the Turkish State regarding USG intentions in northern Iraq; 2) the internal dynamics of the AK power struggle.  
PEARSON